

Super Bowl Turf Grass



Horticultural research at USDA-ARS and land-grant universities are coming up with better types of grass that stands up to the stresses of NFL football. (iStock image)

The eternal argument: Natural grass or artificial turf when it comes to football? If its natural grass, then it probably came from U.S. Department of Agriculture, which breeds the best turf grasses to stand up to cleats, heat, divots and drought.

Super Bowl 50 was played on Tifway, a Bermuda grass developed by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) [partnering with the University of Georgia, and the U.S. and Southern Golf Associations].

Half of the 20th World Cup soccer matches in Brazil, were played on Tifway 419 and TifGrand, also ARS-developed.

When the Tennessee Titans explode onto the field at the Nissan Coliseum, it's on TifSport turf grass.

Before ARS' breeding improvement program, coarse, uneven Bermuda grass was appreciated for its heat tolerance, but that was about all.

Today, professional stadiums and top golf courses along with neighborhood parks, and recreation fields are all turned out in Tif varieties of Bermuda grass. There is a pretty good chance that ARS-developed turfgrasses are grown today on every continent except Antarctica.

Besides being a Super Bowl choice, 'Tifway' is a popular choice by homeowners for a lawn grass.

Some of the USDA-ARS current research is focused on identifying and developing native grasses that require fewer inputs with the goal of creating a more sustainable turfgrass ecosystem.